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BOOKS.

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Dunluce, the O'Gahan family was on the decline.

From his strict alliance with the O'Neills; he exposed himself to the enmity of great O'Donnell of Tyrconnell.

A rupture having happened between O'Neill and O'Donnell, M'Quillan, having espoused the cause of his neighbor, was implicated in the general quarrel.

As O'Donnell sat one night surrounded by his kinsmen, his clansmen, and gallow-glasses, drinking to the memory of heroes long gone, two aged minstrels stood behind, their grey beards hanging down to their girdles, and each clothed with a robe of six different colors, a dignity next to that of an Irish king, and were performing some of those old melancholy air peculiar to Ireland alone.

CHAPTER II.

"Does the wind touch thee, O Harp! or is it some passing ghost? It is the hand of Mivina! Bring me the harp, son of Alpin, another song shall rise; my soul shall depart in the sound."—O's.

The bard tuned their harps to that sweet old Irish air, Coolun, which they touched with just and natural pathos, and after finishing this, they performed, as a concluding piece, the death march of Royal Bryan.

"He's gone," said O'Donnell, "and no wonder that we should sympathize with the mourners of that great man; but if he fell, it was in the arms of victory, and his death gave a dying blow to the worst enemy, I mean a foreign enemy, that ever opposed our country; but where the inhabitants of a nation are divided against each other, I consider it tenfold worse.

Daniel M'Quillan has joined the forces of O'Neill of Clanbuoy, and I am informed, exults much in his noble ally. He thinks, couched beneath the wing of the eagle, he will rest fully secure; but I shall drive him from his hiding-place, and course him like a stug, from Binguthar* to Torr;† and from Torr to the heights of Slagh Barragh.‡ Ha then, turning to the two bards, Malbruthan and Tuadhur,§ told them they must go an inform Daniel M'Quillan that if he would not withdraw his alliance from O'Neill of Clanbuoy, and send his sons as hostages for the fulfillment of the same, he would pay him a visit in a few days, and perhaps an unpleasant one for him.

These threats were uttered in the midst of his numerous clans and gallow-glasses, who made the ancient halls of Tyrconnell ring with the family war-cry, Aboo.

The following day, the two reverend sages set out, each bearing his harp as an emblem of his national function, and arrayed in a robe of sixfold colors. Having come to the banks of the deep and rapid Swilly, they saw a small hut close to the shore, behind which, on a little hill, was drying a fishing-net, equipped with large masses of corkwood on one side to keep it above water, and on the lower side twisted with sheet-lead for a contrary purpose. Against the

* Binguthar, the giant's cape or promontory, was the former name of the Giant's Causeway. I shall not enter upon any description of this promontory at present, there being accounts of it almost in every book-shop. Suffice it to mention one, the cave of Bunkerry, which is only accessible by water, opens between two huge masses of rock, and runs an unknown length under ground; as a horse at a mile's distance from the shore is disturbed by the noise of the waves in this cavern, during a storm, which commotions resemble distant thunder.

† Torr, a lofty headland fronting Morven or Kintyre; the distance between them is 18 miles. Here are the ruins of Fort Dunavarre, and a little above is Sleght na barragh, or the grave of the slaughtered. This was called the Scots warning fire, in consequence of fires of alarm kindled here.

‡ Slagh Barragh, a green ridge of mountain east of the beautiful vale of Glenariff. It becomes more abrupt as it approaches the sea, until, in place of continued verdure, there is only a green spot here and there. These are most luxuriant in soil, on which the sheep are to be seen, not standing, but almost hanging, and on this lofty eminence, with their mouths full, saluting the early passenger as he eyes them from beneath. The streams that pour over it resemble the waterfall of a mill, touching the precipice only in some places. The front of this hill is called Garron point, and is clothed with a spontaneous growth of hazel and oak.

§ It was the business of the bards to go as ambassadors between belligerent powers; also, to keep the armour, and family history, records, and genealogy. Their persons were held sacred, and even their houses, by the most ferocious enemy. We see something of this in Alexander, the Great sparing the house of Pindar, when he burned Thebes.

hood, "I say, 'twas but the other day, God bless us and keep us from an ill hour, that he took the curragh,* and went out to catch a score or two of the glashens achree for the garlachs;† and, as I was saying, I've seen me, just as he got over the channel, one of them large sais came swelling up, and striking her abait, she shipt so much water that she was just going down; but at that moment another struck her on the larboard, and capized her like a salt-bax. Thinks I to myself, it's all up with yee, Phelimy; for I was lucken on at the whole racket from that big stone there. I grew blind with fear, and thought my head was running round like a wheel rim. What would you have of it, was the lad lying right across her keel like a sack upon an ass. Oh, Chierna be praised,‡ graumachree! And was not all this the doing of God Almighty himself, ashore. Sure Baldearg could do nothing for him here, nor yet for himself; nat saying but he would if he could, bless him; but to make a long story short, I gat the large boat, and hurled him ashore in the cracking of a walnut."

They asked him had he no kind of milk for the children, seeing that it would be so nourishing for them who fed almost continually on fish. "Arrah! that's what we have, gragalmachree, and dwowl a better stripper than Brawnny in the barrantry; that is, I mane when she was a stripper. She is now in calf, and her time will be in, for all the world, fourteen days after new Candlemas, ould style, jewel. I have it cut on the end of my shillelah."

"And pray, how do you feed her?" said they. "Why, do you see that little scrag of a wood aver bye there in the hip of the hill; I let her ate in it to the middle of the day, and then I drive her home, and cut her two or three ereels of the yagh or sai weed from the rocks, and on this, be assured, she will fill all the vessels in the teigh.§ And, moreover and above, I can toll yee, that by spreading the yagh on a lee ridge, we can raise the finest and sweetest of soil, dear; and by sowing the sai sand over the ground, we have good corn but no matter for all these things; honey."

His guests were delighted with his very clear and entertaining explanations, as well as his pious ideas, regarding the overruling care of providence.

"Here," said they, "the sea, which would appear to us a great inconvenience, and still more an almost impassable barrier, affords to this solitary family, and their domestics, an inexhaustible store of provisions.

They told him that it was time now they should depart, and would be glad if he would be kind enough to leave them on the other side. Darkness had already covered the adjacent cliffs, and hid from their eyes the face of the deep. There was also a strong gale blowing from the north-west.

Their host entreated them to wait a little till the moon would rise, which would not be long, and then they could cross it both swifter and with more safety; and, perhaps, the blessing of the clergy light down on yee, you would play us two or three springs of ould times.

"Cathleen, lay by that wheel with yere whirring and birring; I wonder yee have not more manners before the jintlemen. Clane up that house, and put more oil in the lamp. Sit back, Phelimy, you and Pat, and you, Barney. Choo Drake, go slait agaddy."

The dog sprang to one corner, and the children to another. The landlord threw his hat under a kind of bench, as if to give more respect and attention to the performers, and sat looking at them alternately, as they toned and prepared their instruments. After having touched over several old melodies, they commenced that sweetest of Irish airs, which goes now by the name of the Cold Frosty Morning. This tune cannot be unknown to any one that ever had the least taste for our national music. As they were accustomed to perform in concert, their strokes were natural and well timed, the sound of each vibrating chord dying away like distant echo.

O'Fallon, this was the fisherman's name, sat sighing deeply, one time looking at the minstrels, and another at Cathleen, who was sitting rather with her side to them, holding her apron to her eyes. "Och on, och on!" exclaimed O'Fallon, "but that brings to my mind the sweet ould times that never will return. Och hushla machree, na roon, och on, och on!"—The poor man and his wife were melted down into tears by the fascinating power of the harp,

"We belong to the same sept," said Malbruthan, "and are going on an important business across the Swilly, the Foyle, and the Bann. Will you be so good as to extend that accommodation to us that you have so often supplied to our common protector?"

"What," said the fisherman, "do you mean God Almighty, or do you mean great Baldearg of Tyrconnell?"

"You are right," said the bard, "the Almighty is certainly the common parent of us all, but does not require accommodation so much as Baldearg."

"And if he did," said the other, "I should grant it as willingly and even more so; for we could live without Tyrconnell in a kind of way, but not without God. It was but the other day, my child," pointing to his eldest son, who had nearly attained the years of man-

hood, "I say, 'twas but the other day, God bless us and keep us from an ill hour, that he took the curragh,* and went out to catch a score or two of the glashens achree for the garlachs;† and, as I was saying, I've seen me, just as he got over the channel, one of them large sais came swelling up, and striking her abait, she shipt so much water that she was just going down; but at that moment another struck her on the larboard, and capized her like a salt-bax. Thinks I to myself, it's all up with yee, Phelimy; for I was lucken on at the whole racket from that big stone there. I grew blind with fear, and thought my head was running round like a wheel rim. What would you have of it, was the lad lying right across her keel like a sack upon an ass. Oh, Chierna be praised,‡ graumachree! And was not all this the doing of God Almighty himself, ashore. Sure Baldearg could do nothing for him here, nor yet for himself; nat saying but he would if he could, bless him; but to make a long story short, I gat the large boat, and hurled him ashore in the cracking of a walnut."

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together with the soft and melancholy pathos of their national music.*

During the time of performance, Drake lay whining a mournful kind of ditty, keeping time with the minstrels; but, indeed, his pipo seemed to be the discordant notes of torture rather than anything else. His actions, however, disturbed O'Fallon, his master, so powerfully, that he took off his brogue, and flung it at him, with "Go slait and be damned, agaddy." The dog seeing that he had misbehaved, made the best of his way to the cavern, and exchanging the sound of Apollo's harp for that of Triton's shell, laid himself down with a groan.

O'Fallon, rising up, and approaching the musicians, holding out one arm like a gun, and scrubbing the sleeve round with the other hand, said, "Arrah, mannann yee, could you play me the ould Rinceadh fada, that I used to dance at the castle of Baldearg?"

Being answered in the affirmative, he stood up before his Cathleen as straight as a poplar, and making a princely bow, handed her to the opposite side of the cabin. The children's eyes were glistening to see their father and mother in such spirits; and as the harp struck up the humorous jig, he crossed to the other side of the house like a shadow, and with one foot before another, thundered off a few hard beaten steps of a hornpippo; then, with a hirroo, crossed the floor again, his light-heeled partner passing through all the involutions and evolutions with equal agility, at the same time holding her apron extended with both her hands, as if she were guarding fowls into a barn door.

Then, with his right hand on his haunch, the other vibrating at his side like a pendulum, again to the left, and with a whisk, snapping his fingers as he passed his lady, he appeared in the ground where he started. After heeling, toeing, wheeling, channeling, and frisking, the harp changed to a slow minuet, upon which he immediately called for his hat, and stealing round the walls with his arms extended, bowing, kneeling, and bending with the utmost pliability of limbs, &c., traversed the extremities of the floor like an Irish king; his wily partner wafting round the walls like a shadow, and moving from his approaches with captivating shyness, kept her eye slyly askance on her graceful paramour. The dance being ended, Cathleen prepared supper by broiling some fresh fish, and toasting a couple of large oaten cakes, baked of a kind of meal, called by the Irish, grudding;† The strangers praised the fare, and having washed it down with a draught of Brawnny's Bunnarammer, they devoutly, on their knees, returned thanks to Him who stores the air, the sea, and the land, with provisions for his children. As they rose from their devotion, the broad moon had protruded her golden edge over the mountain of Ailagh, as if awaiting the solemnization of this happy supper. "Och, my bannagh light on your purty face," said O'Fallon, as he turned round in the floor, and saw her ascending like a fiery balloon above the Swilly. "My bannagh light on you over again, say I, who has lit me over the waves, many a dripping, dreary night, hushla."

The boat was soon drawn up, and the strangers, having taken a friendly leave of the family, embarked, being accompanied by their host and his eldest son, as good and as fearless a seaman as ever wielded an oar. They had proceeded a small distance to sea, when Captain O'Fallon recollected a line that he intended to cast somewhere beyond the channel; and resting a little on their oars, he put his finger into his mouth and gave three whistles. This surprised the passengers very much, for they could not conceive what means his wife or family had of sending the article that he wanted. A considerable time afterward they perceived Drake's head rising on a large blue swell, and greatly exhausted, having to fight his road against both wind and water.

"Arrah, kead miel a faltie to yee, my poor fellow," said he, "what could I do without you?" Then cutting off a piece of twine nearly the same as that which he wanted, he gave it into Drake's mouth, who, bounding over the side of the boat, disappeared in a few minutes, the tide being somewhat in his favor; and with the line and hooks wrapped round his neck, soon appeared again. O'Fallon took him into the vessel, and informed them that when his wife saw what Drake bore in his mouth, it

* There is a pleasing sadness peculiar to the old slow music of Ireland, which it possesses beyond all others. This caused a celebrated Italian musician to exclaim, on hearing some of our plaintive airs performed, "that it was a land of woe."

† Grudding was meal ground in a kind of hand-mill, known by the name of querns, the stones of which I have often seen dug up near the foundation of old dwellings. The grain got no other preparation than thrashing, cleaning, and drying, often in a large pot. It was then ground down, husks and all, and being sifted, produced a delicious bread. My father told me he has often eaten of it.

‡ When the wind blows up the gut, it is necessary to sail against it, until the boat nearly reach the channel.

* A curragh is a light kind of boat, not much wider than a cradle, made with ribs, and a riza nearly after the manner of a basket, and not much weightier, over it they sew a horse or cow hide, and in such a vessel will go out to the open sea, and I have it affirmed, sometimes to Scotland. † The boys, or growing boys. ‡ Jesus be praised. § Cabin.